

# CONGRATULATING CELLARS AT JASPER HILL

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, Vermont is a farming State: dairy, livestock, vegetables or fruit, farms across Vermont are known for their innovative and sustainable approaches to farming and food production.

The dairy industry in particular is known throughout Vermont, and far beyond. Dairy cows are a familiar sight for those who live in or visit our State, and Vermont farms have been recognized both domestically and internationally for their dairy-based products. The cheese-making tradition in Vermont dates back to the early 1900s, when Vermont dairy farmers sought uses for their surplus milk. Since those early days, many farms have developed methods for artisanal cheese production.

Recently, Jasper Hill—a celebrated farm in Greensboro Bend, VT—won international recognition at the World Cheese Awards in London, when its Bayley Hazen Blue cheese won the award for the “World’s Best Unpasteurized Cheese.” Besting more than 2,600 submissions, Jasper Hill’s award-winning blue cheese also took home a Super Gold award. Six other cheeses produced by Jasper Hill also won awards. And two other Vermont cheese makers—Grafton Village Cheese and the Vermont Creamery—were also recognized.

Some might skip over a story about the World Cheese Awards. But in Vermont, we take pride in the products we produce from the livestock nurtured and raised on Vermont’s rich land. Farming remains a fabric of our American story, and in Vermont, it is a tradition that has spanned generations.

Congratulations to the Cellars at Jasper Hill, to Grafton Village Cheese, and to the Vermont Creamery for their recent recognitions. They represent the quality and high standards that are a hallmark of the Vermont brand.

I ask unanimous consent that the text of a story recently featured about these dairies on Vermont Public Radio be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From Vermont Public Radio, Nov. 17, 2014]

## CELLARS AT JASPER HILL WINS “WORLD’S BEST UNPASTEURIZED CHEESE”

(By Angela Evancie)

Before a recent batch of the Cellars at Jasper Hill’s Bayley Hazen Blue cheese was finished aging, before it was ready to sell, and before it would be crowned—or rindred?—“World’s Best Unpasteurized Cheese” at the World Cheese Awards in London, its makers knew they had something special.

“I’m not lying when I say we were excited about it at a young age,” Vince Razonale, sales and inventory manager for Jasper Hill, said by phone Monday. “We tasted it on day 50, and this particular batch was one that we thought was really on point.” (So on point, they thought, that it merited an Instagram post.)

The more than 250 international cheese experts who judged the 26th annual World

Cheese Awards this weekend agreed. Bayley Hazen Blue was selected from more than 2,600 cheeses, first winning a Super Gold award and then its “World’s Best” award.

It isn’t the only superlative Vermont can add to its list of aged-milk achievements; Grafton Village Cheese also earned two Super Golds, for its Shespos and Bismark cheeses, while Vermont Creamery took home one gold for its Bijou goat’s milk cheese, and seven bronzes. Six other cheeses by Jasper Hill also won awards, including gold medals for its Cabot Clothbound and Moses Sleeper. “Ten years ago, American cheese was something to be laughed at in England. Now, collectively, we’re a force to be reckoned with.”—Vince Razonale, Jasper Hill Farm

Vermont cheese has certainly made a notable debut on the domestic stage. Vermont’s Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Ross recently noted that cheeses made here have been named “Best In Show” at the American Cheese Society Conference for the past two years: Jasper Hill’s Winnimere in 2013, and the Farms for City Kids Foundation’s Tarentaise Reserve this year.

But Razonale says the international acclaim shows how far cheese making, in the U.S. in general and Vermont in particular, has come.

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## ALAN GROSS

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the fifth anniversary of the unfair arrest and imprisonment of an American citizen in Cuba from Maryland, Mr. Alan Gross. I stand with his wife Judy, and their two daughters in calling for the immediate release of Mr. Gross by the Cuban government.

In 2009, Mr. Gross went to Cuba as a contractor for the U.S. Agency for International Development. On this visit to Cuba, he wanted to assist Cuba’s Jewish community by improving their access to the internet. With a background in social work, he dedicated his career to helping others around the world.

The Cuban government arrested Mr. Gross on December 3, 2009. He was held for 14 months without being charged with a crime. He was eventually charged as a spy and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

At 65 years old, Mr. Gross’ physical and mental health has suffered severely over the past 5 years. He has lost a significant amount of weight and developed several painful medical conditions. His contact with his family is extremely limited, compounding his anxiety. On his birthday, May 2, 2014, Mr. Gross made several statements that demonstrated the mental strain and anguish that he feels daily. Following the death of his mother in June, he was visited by his wife Judy and said his goodbyes to her. Mr. Gross’ current physical and mental state is at a critical point. The Cuban government must allow him to come home to the United States.

Judy Gross has never given up. She continues to put pressure on the Cuban government, speaking out against the poor treatment of her husband. She is

a true inspiration, continuing her fight despite the health and financial challenges that her family has felt.

Every day I think of and pray for the Gross family. I pray that they are reunited soon. If Cuba wants to improve relations with the United States, they need to release Mr. Gross now. I thank my colleagues for standing with me and calling for the release of Alan Gross. I look forward to the day that we welcome him home to Maryland, and most importantly, to his family.

## EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, last week I released a staff report that found litigation missteps at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission are costing taxpayers millions, while at the same time EEOC faces a deep backlog of discrimination complaints.

The report finds that the EEOC has had a recent pattern of pursuing questionable cases through sometimes overly aggressive means and as a result has suffered significant court losses that are embarrassing to the agency and costly to taxpayers.

Courts have found EEOC’s litigation tactics to be so egregious they have ordered EEOC to pay defendants’ attorney’s fees in 10 cases since 2011. The courts have criticized EEOC for misuse of its authority, poor expert analysis, and pursuit of novel cases unsupported by law.

While the agency has pursued high-profile lawsuits without a complainant, in March 2014 EEOC reported almost 71,000 unresolved complaints of discrimination from individuals who filed charges. The agency’s litigation has recovered almost \$200 million less for victims than under the previous administration over the same timeframe.

The report finds that EEOC also has suffered from a troubling lack of transparency. In the past 2½ years, EEOC has ignored calls from current Commissioners and Congress to allow public review of significant and controversial guidance prior to its adoption. Also, the Office of General Counsel has, since 2010, failed to issue its standard annual report, and the agency is being sued for violating the Freedom of Information Act.

Certainly, the EEOC of today has had successful enforcement efforts and court victories for victims of discrimination, but this report finds the agency is increasingly demonstrating poor judgment and using questionable tactics in pursuit of cases that are not fulfilling the EEOC’s objective of protecting employees from workplace discrimination.

The full report, “EEOC: An Agency on the Wrong Track? Litigation Failures, Misfocused Priorities and Lack of Transparency Raise Concerns about Important Anti-Discrimination Agency,” may be viewed on the HELP Committee’s website, <http://www.help.senate.gov/>.